Bag Lady of St. Charles Avenue
Elaine McDermott

She strolls through the Garden District, where debutantes dance in Tara mansions capped with white cupulas.

Stopping at the Andrew Jackson Condominiums, she sifts through galvanized cans and selects treasures for her D. H Holmes shopping bag.

She discards the rhinestone unicorn with its open wound that was once an eye but keeps the silk scarf caught in its clasp.

The bag lady likes the feel of silk on her crinkled skin.

Brushing past a beggar who rakes in trinkets, the bag lady examines a chipped ballerina. She decides in favor of a dog-eared Picasso print.

With graying curls neatly tucked inside a crushed velvet turban, she straightens her black hose, riveted with runs.

When the bag lady re-enters the avenue, she is wearing the silk paisley scarf.

Counting the exact fare
from a frayed black bag, 
she bounces aboard 
the St. Charles Avenue Streetcar.

When it stops 
at the Pontchartrain Hotel, 
she steps down 
gingerly.